



SOONER SPIRIT



A Daily Publication of the 2005 19th National Veterans Golden Age Games

Tuesday, May 24, 2005

On Your Mark. Get Set. Go!

Golden Age Competitors Move Full Speed Ahead to Senior Olympics

by Monica A. Smith, PAO
VA Maryland Health Care System

A new sense of purpose was born at the 2004 National Veterans Golden Age Games when 73-year-old Marilyn Hilliard learned that she would qualify for competition in the 2005 National Senior Olympics. "Thinking about the upcoming event is keeping me energized and ready to go," said Hilliard, an Army veteran from Butler, Pa. Now, as she prepares for the Senior Olympics in Pittsburgh, June 3-18, 2005, Hilliard is gaining momentum as she enters a new world of competition.

Like Hilliard, all Golden Age Games competitors can now qualify for the Senior Olympics without having to



Darwin Benjamin of Sunland, Calif. shows photos from his time as a stunt double.

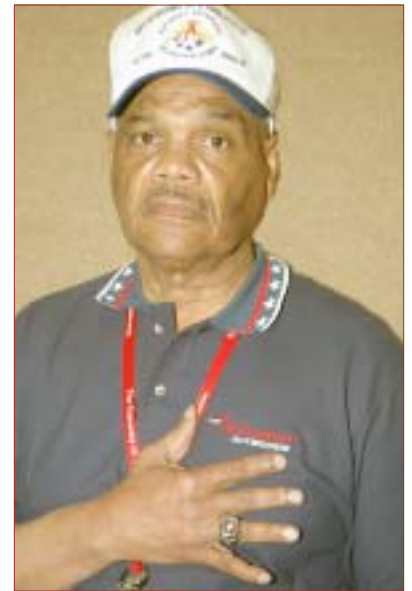
compete in their home states. Prior to 2004, competitors could only qualify for the Senior Olympics, which are held every two years, by competing in local and state competitions. The National Senior Olympics, an 18-sport competition for men and women age 50 and over, is a community-based member of the U.S. Olympic Committee.

For Darwin Benjamin of Sunland, Calif., making the jump to the Senior Olympics was a natural

progression. At 59, this former stunt double (for actor Chuck Norris) is used to taking risks. Some of them involved jumping out of planes, getting set on fire and being suspended in mid-air. Adventure is the name of the game for the Air Force veteran, who wouldn't trade his life experiences for anything. "I now have a second chance to enjoy living through the Golden Age Games and the upcoming Senior Olympics," said Benjamin, who was thrilled to learn last year that he would qualify. He is gearing up for next month's event, when he makes his Senior Olympics swimming debut in the backstroke competition.

When asked why the Games are so important to him, Benjamin expressed his gratitude for being a participant and how it has given him a chance to be young again. "That is what it is all about," he explained. "We go from being in our youth to being youthful again. It's an immeasurable therapy that cannot be explained."

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Bernard Gibson of Washington, D.C. shows off his ring from the Senior Olympics.



Heard around the Games

by Clayton Cochrane, VA Central Office Public Affairs

Among the many thousands of volunteers this week, we thought you'd like to hear what they're saying about you and their experience at the Games.

"Vets are such special people, and it's great to see their competitive spirit in action," said JoAnn Schlegel, a physical therapist at the Oklahoma City VAMC. She also was impressed by the young military volunteers and the veteran participants sharing stories of their military service.



**Jo Ann Caballero of
Oklahoma City**

excellent." He also works with veterans every day as a social worker at the Oklahoma City VAMC.

Jo Ann Caballero got interested in the Games when her husband encouraged her to volunteer. He's an Oklahoma City VAMC staff member who is also volunteering this week. "It's especially nice to see the vets at the dances," said Caballero. "I love to help out vets here and listen to them, and let them know that people care about them."

Catherine Lord is on active duty with the Navy here in Oklahoma, so she's interested in meeting Navy veterans. "I think the Games are wonderful," she said. "It's so great to hear lots of sea stories from the Navy veterans."

Harvey G. Potts said this about the Games, "They're outstanding, well organized, and the participation is

Naweeta Shropshire of Blanchard, Okla., is a new volunteer with VA. She's been volunteering since late last year at the Oklahoma City VAMC, urged on by her sister, Geneva Clanton. "It's such a good thing to be involved in," said Shropshire.

Suzanne Thomasson has lots of hugs for active duty military members, and lots of appreciation for veterans. A volunteer from Glencoe, Okla. she worked near Registration and had a chance to see most of the participants. "We've had a ball," she said. "It's great to have a chance to say 'hello' and 'good morning' to all the veterans."

Look for more quips and quotes in future editions of, *Sooner Spirit*.



**JoAnn Schlegel of
Oklahoma City**

We Need Your Photo!

We are missing identification photos of the following:

Ervin Fleming, #275
Jimmy Richardson, #254
Danny Proctor, #498
Dennis Wyant, #119

If you want photos to go with your hometown news release, please stop by the Media Center, Forum Bldg., Wing B, and let us take your photo!



“Olympics,” continued from page 1

For others, like Army veteran Bernard Gibson, going to the Senior Olympics presents a different challenge. This June, his challenge will be to own up to his 1997 gold medal in table tennis. A repeat competitor at the Senior Olympics, the 69-year-old Washington, D.C. native offers some advice to other veterans who may be thinking of competing. “Stay active all year,” he advised. This prescription of activity has apparently worked well for Gibson, who has won numerous table tennis matches for himself and others he has coached or trained.

Perhaps much of Gibson’s success can be attributed to his unselfish attitude to share what he knows. He will train anyone who is willing to learn the sport, including fellow veterans here at the Games, nursing home patients, local school children and even some from around the world. “Ever since I first began my table tennis journey at age 11, I have always wanted to study the sport,” said Gibson who has been trained professionally. “The best part about training for me is recording and watching the tape of my play. It allows me to better execute moves and then demonstrate them during competition.”

Obviously, Gibson takes the sport seriously because he has made it a number one priority in life. At one point, he even challenged his cardiologist, who had told him he needed a triple bypass in 1969. “I told my doctor that the only way I would have the operation was if I would still be able to play. Then he chuckled and told me that I would be ‘quicker and faster’ than ever before.” Gibson took his doctor up on that promise by challenging him to a game after he recuperated. Beating the good doctor, Gibson agreed to coach him later to help his physician improve.

Hilliard, Benjamin and Gibson are among seven National Veterans Golden Age Games competitors who will be traveling to Pittsburgh in just a couple of weeks. All look forward to the chance to represent their fellow veterans and bring home the gold. For those who are interested, the next Senior Olympics will be held in 2007 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Statistics of the Games

**Number of participants
registered: 512**

Number of women: 32

**220 veterans in the Games have seen
combat**

**83 of these veterans were wounded in
combat**

Conflict numbers:

Vietnam	131
Korea	43
World War II	67
Gulf War	5

Branches of service:

Army	266
Navy	96
Air Force	81
Marine	66
Coast Guard	9
National Guard	2
Army Air Corps	21
Unknown	13

Sooner Gold



Walter Brewer
of Schoharie,
N.Y. gets in
form during
croquet.



Ed Redmond of Spring Hill, Fla.
demonstrates his backstroke.

Sunny Shapiro of
Fresno, Calif. lets
that bowling ball roll.



Ron Eller of
Kodiak, Alaska
gets into the swing
of things.

Robert C. Doggett
of Lakewood, Colo.
strokes toward the
finish line.





Louis Mailberg of Yountville, Calif. receives a ticket from Susan Vaughn for the door prize.



John Kritzer of Brookfield, Ill. tries out one of the Harley motorcycle at the Sunday evening motorcycle show.



Robin Lantz of Midway City Okla., a retired army veteran, shows off his "Road King" Harley motorcycle.



Catching up with old times at the Harvey and the Wallbanger's show.



Taking a break from the competition, this group seems to be all smiles at the zoo.





Volunteers are excited to share Oklahoma hospitality with veterans,

coaches, visitors and staff attending the 19th National Veterans Golden Age Games. Look for the distinctive blue shirts of the volunteers who will not only provide refreshments, but will also have table games, a big screen TV and other activities for your relaxation.

Speaking of relaxation, student massage therapists from Praxis College are offering free massages Tuesday through Thursday from 1 p.m. - 7 p.m. Look for their massage tables set up in the Walker Tower lobby.

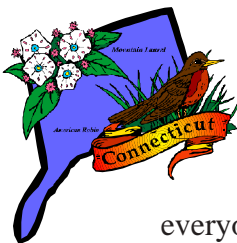


The hospitality area, located in the Walker Tower lobby will be open 8 a.m. - 9 p.m., through Thursday. For further information, please stop at the Information Station or find a volunteer in the bright blue shirt.



Transportation for alternate activities will depart from the front of Walker Tower.

Please check at the alternate activities table for more information and departure times.



For those of you from Connecticut, we heard that the emcee's announcement of your state during the Opening Ceremonies may not have been heard by everyone. While Connecticut was certainly in the emcee's script and we believe that it was announced, it may not have been loud enough for everyone to hear. (Or else all those cheers from the large California brigade may have drowned it out!) So for our five competitors from the fifth state in the Union, which achieved statehood in 1788 and whose name is Mohegan "Quinnehtukqut" for "Long River Place," please accept our apologies! And good luck bringing back some ~~Sooner~~ **Constitution** Gold!



Veterans History Project (VHP) interviews continue through Thursday, May 26, in the Forum Bldg., Room B6, but you must schedule an appointment. Once scheduled, don't forget your appointment!

If you were unable to make an appointment during registration and would like to participate in the VHP, stop by the Forum Bldg., Room B6 at the top of each hour to see if there are appointments still available.

VCS Bingo Blowout Tomorrow Night

Please bring your competitor vest to the VCS bingo blowout tomorrow night. Some fantastic door prizes will be given away by drawing numbers during this event. Come meet Chad

Hennings, former Dallas Cowboy and Gulf War veteran. Bring your number, your ID and your lucky charm!



The medical support area is located on the third floor of Walker Tower, in rooms 328 and 329W, just off the elevators. Medical support will be available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily and until noon on Friday. Medical staff will be available 24 hours each day, but after 8 p.m., rooms 328 and 329W are for emergencies only.

Don't forget your bandanna! The *Hugs Project* has provided every veteran with a neck bandanna that can be dampened to help cool you down!

Sisters of Swing and Western Night

Come join us for some old-fashioned fun with a western flair this evening. First, we'll be serving up barbeque out on the Walker-Adams mall starting at 5 p.m. Of course when you come to Oklahoma you expect to see horses, so we'll have some horses out on the mall too. Come on over and have your photo taken! Or, you can load up in the hay wagon pulled by Belgian horses and go for a hay ride. As a special treat we've invited a little feller to perform some of his famous "roper" tricks. At



7 p.m., the "Sisters of Swing," (Oklahoma City gals who are well known in these parts) will be entertaining the crowd with everything from "Sentimental Journey" to rock and roll tunes. We're expecting that a mighty good time will be had by all, so ya'll come down now, y'hear?



Today's Meal Schedule

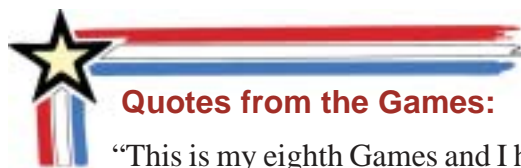
Breakfast — 6 a.m. - 8 a.m.

Lunch — 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Dinner — 5 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Replenish your energy supply at the Couch Cafeteria. The cafeteria has a lot of variety in its menus.

Note: Tonight's cafeteria offerings will be limited due to the barbeque on the Walker-Adams mall.



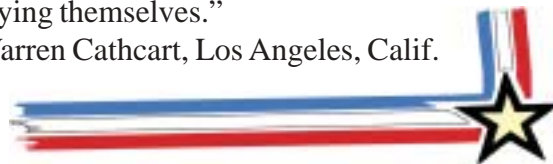
Quotes from the Games:

"This is my eighth Games and I have 10 medals. But the camaraderie is what these Games is all about!"

~ Andrew Onifer, Bonham, Texas

"I just started bowling two years ago. I love bowling, but I'm more of a golfer. I'm competing in golf and enjoying the games. Oklahoma is great and everybody here is enjoying themselves."

~ Warren Cathcart, Los Angeles, Calif.



Little known facts about the Sooner State include it being home to the world's first installed parking meter, which occurred in Oklahoma City on July 16, 1935. Oklahoman Carl C. Magee is generally credited as the originator. Another Oklahoman, Sylvan Goldman, invented the first shopping cart. And yet another Okie, Bob Dunn, invented the first electric guitar in 1935.

Cyber Cafe

The Cyber Cafe is open in the Forum Bldg., Room C2. Drop in to check your e-mail or surf the internet. It is open daily from 6 a.m. to 12 a.m. It closes on Thursday at 3 p.m.





SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR...

Tuesday, May 24, 2005

6 a.m. - 8 a.m.	Breakfast, Couch Cafeteria
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.	Shuffleboard Houston Huffman Center
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.	Horseshoes Timberdell Field
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.	Checkers Forum Building, Rooms C1, C3
8 a.m.	OKC Nat'l Memorial and Museum, OKC Downtown
9 a.m.	Stockyards and Shopping OKC Stockyards City
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.	Shopping Shuttle, Norman
11 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.	Lunch, Couch Cafeteria
1 p.m.	45 th Infantry Museum Oklahoma City
2 p.m.	Tres Suenos Vinyards & Winery Luther, Okla.
3 p.m. - 5 p.m.	Medal Ceremony OCCE Commons Restaurant
5 p.m. - 7 p.m.	Dinner, Couch Cafeteria OR Barbeque, Walker-Adams Mall
7 p.m. - 9 p.m.	Sisters of Swing Walker-Adams Mall
9 p.m. - 12 a.m.	Sooner Shindig Forum Building Conference Room A



Partly Cloudy
High 93° / Low 68°
Southeasterly Winds 10 - 18 mph



WHEELCHAIR REPAIR

The Wheelchair Repair room is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Walker Tower to handle repair needs. For after hour emergencies, call Greg Rosales at (405) 409-7082.

For Your Spiritual Health

During the Games, the Chaplain's office is located in Walker Tower, 2 East Study Lounge. Chaplains will be available daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Friday, May 27 at noon. Or, you can call (405) 606-9218. For after hours or emergencies (from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m.), please call (405) 606-9220.

Police and On-Site Security

Oklahoma City VA Medical Center Police will provide 24-hour, on-site security in the Forum Building. Police officers are responsible for monitoring the safety of participants at special events as well as safeguarding money, computer equipment and supplies. Contact Officer Tim Collins at (405) 640-0287 if you need police assistance.

SOONER SPIRIT

Want to submit a story idea for the daily *Sooner Spirit*?

The Public Affairs Team has prepared news releases, continues to write articles for the *Sooner Spirit*, and is working with the media to publicize the events this week.

If you have ideas for news stories, photographs or something you'd like to see in the *Sooner Spirit* before the final edition, stop by the Media Center located in the Forum Bldg., B Wing. We'd love to hear from you!



Look for the daily *Sooner Spirit* on the Web at:

www.veteransgoldenagegames.org